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## A Question of Style: individual voices and corporate identity in the Edinburgh Review, 1814-1820

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Benatti, Francesca and King, David (2017). A Question of Style: individual voices and corporate identity in the Edinburgh Review, 1814-1820. In: DHSI 2017 Colloquium, 6-15 Jun 2017, University of Victoria, Canada.

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# **A Question of Style: individual voices and corporate identity in the *Edinburgh Review*, 1814-1820**

Francesca Benatti and David King

# Research question

Did the *Edinburgh Review* create a “transauthorial discourse” (Klancher 1987) that hid the voices of individual contributors behind a corporate style?

Funded by the [Research Society for Victorian Periodicals](#)  
Field Development Grant (January-October 2017)

# The *Edinburgh Review*

Most influential British periodical in early 19th C.

Edited by Francis Jeffrey, who could make alterations to any article

All articles published anonymously



# Planned Corpus

## *Edinburgh Review:*

- 325,000 'words'
- 60 articles

## *Quarterly Review:*

- 175,000 'words'
- 20 articles

Chosen from reviews of books of literature, travel writing, history, biography

# Corpus preparation

Extend corpus:

- Finding appropriate texts

Developing previous work to:

- Semi-automate post-OCR correction
- Semi-automate TEI markup
- Semi-automate quotation detection

# Two interpretations of style\*

## Style as fingerprint

**Unconscious** elements in the way we write

(e.g. Van Halteren et al. "Existence of a human stylome." (2005))

Reflected by use of **Most Frequent Words**

## Style as signature

**Conscious** choice of words, sentences, tone

(e.g. Van Dalen-Oskam [Riddle of Literary Quality](#) project)

Still **unsure** how to identify with stylometry

\* as defined by Sarah Allison at DH2016, Stylistics workshop, 12 July 2016

# MFW vs TF:IDF

Both attempt to remove  
the influence of content over style  
in the analysis

## MFW

Frequent words

Choose what to *include* in  
the analysis

Unconscious style?

## TF:IDF

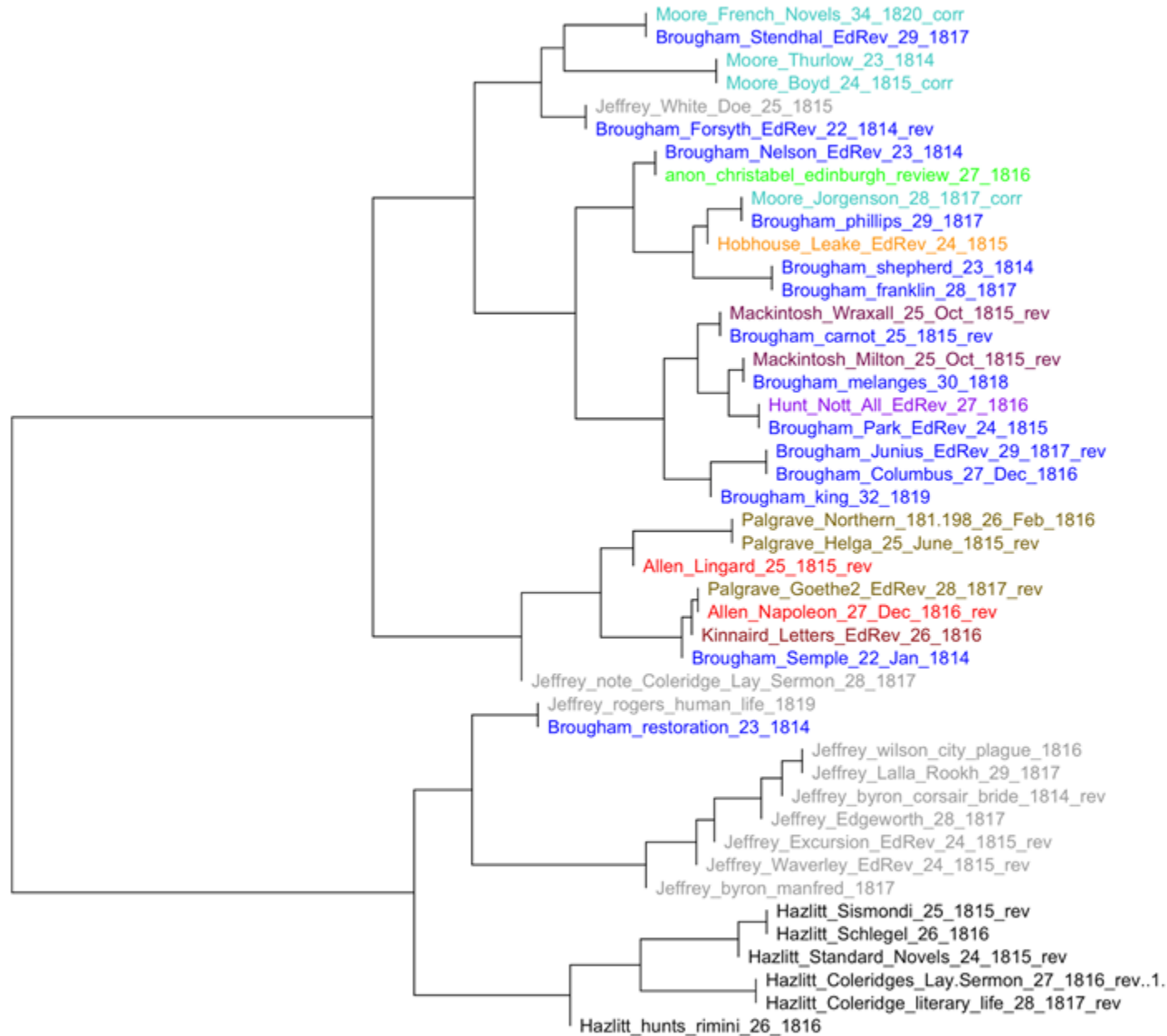
Significant words

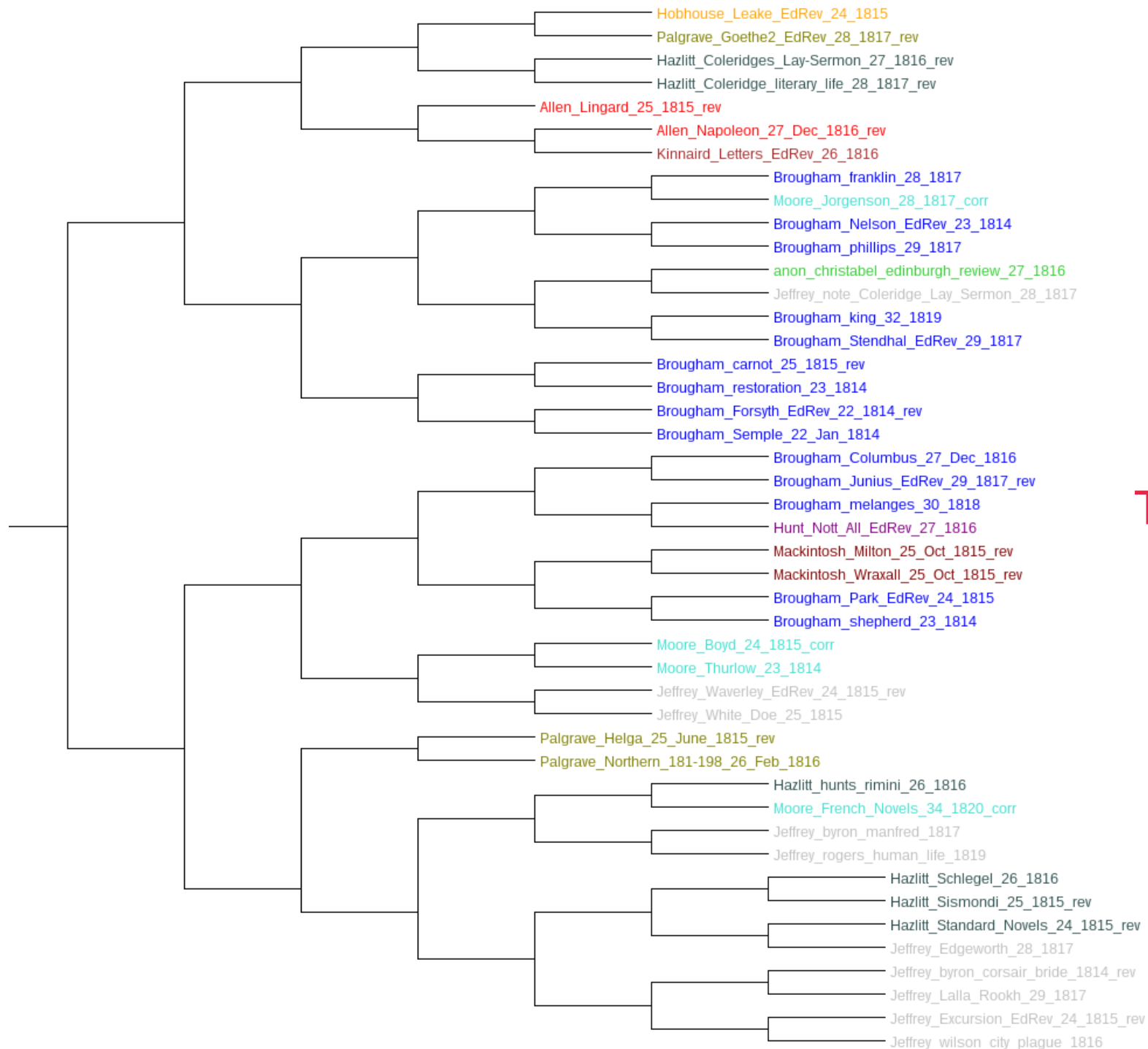
Choose what to *exclude*  
from the analysis

Conscious style?



# BARS Cluster Analysis





TF:IDF only  
pruning  
70 words

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and Mathematics  
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Project blog: <http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/styleproject/>

Project outputs (in 2018): <https://ou.figshare.com/>